

THE TREES OF PALESTINE

SUBLIME LANGUAGE OF THE SCRIPTURES ON THE CEDARS.

Dr. Talmage Describes the Scenes on Mount Lebanon and Deduces Moral Lessons Therefrom—The Prophets Loved to Gaze Upon the Mighty Forests.

BROOKLYN, Dec. 14.—Today Dr. Talmage preached the twelfth sermon of his series on Palestine and the adjoining countries. After delivering it in the morning in the Academy of Music in this city, he preached it again in the evening in New York, at the service held under the auspices of the Christian Herald. Before commencing his sermon Dr. Talmage stated that in spite of all the efforts that were being put forth to hasten the completion of his new Tabernacle, the work was on so magnificent a scale and the necessity for care in its construction so imperative that, judging by present indications, it would not be ready for dedication before Easter. He was happy to say, however, that the hospitality of the Christian Herald, through which these Sunday evening services in New York had been held, would be continued, and the publisher of that journal had already secured an extension of the lease of the Academy of Music. He would therefore be able to hold services there every Sunday evening until the new Tabernacle was finished. Owing to the inclemency of the weather he would discontinue the custom of giving an address out of doors after the regular exercises to the crowd of people who had been unable to gain admission to the Academy; but the publisher of the Christian Herald was endeavoring to obtain the use of a church or public building in the neighborhood in which an overflow service could be held. Dr. Talmage then announced as his text Psalm cix, 16, "The cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted," and preached the following sermon:

In our journey we change stirrup for wheel. It is four o'clock in the morning at Damascus, Syria, and we are among the lanterns of the hostelry waiting for the stage to start. A Mohammedan in high life is putting his three wives on board within an apartment by themselves, and our party occupy the main apartment of one of the most uncomfortable vehicles in which mortals were ever jammed and half strangled. But we must not let the discomforts annoy or disparage the opportunities. We are rolling out and up the mountains of Lebanon, their foreheads under a crown of snow, which coronet the fingers of the hottest summer cannot cast down.

CLIMBING UP LEBANON. We are ascending heights around which is garlanded much of the finest poetry of the Scriptures, and are rising toward the mightiest dominion that botany ever recognized, reigned over by the most imperial tree that ever swayed a leafy scepter—the Lebanon cedar; a tree indigenous in my text as having grown from a nut put into the ground by God himself, and no human hand had anything to do with its planting: "The trees of Lebanon which he hath planted."

The average height of this mountain is seven thousand feet, but in one place it lifts its head to an altitude of ten thousand. No higher than six thousand feet can vegetation exist, but below that line at the right season are vineyards and orchards and olive groves and flowers that dash the mountain side with a very carriage of color and fill the air with aromatics that Hosea, the prophet, and Solomon, the king, celebrated as "the smell of Lebanon." At a height of six thousand feet is a grove of cedars, the only descendants of those vast forests from which Solomon cut his timber for the temple of Jerusalem, and where at one time there were one hundred thousand axmen hewing out the beams from which great cities were constructed. But this nation of trees has by human iconoclasm been massacred until only a small group is left. This race of giants is nearly extinct, but I have no doubt that some of these were here when Hiram, king of Tyre, ordered the assassination of those cedars of Lebanon which the Lord planted. From the multitude of uses to which it may be put and the employment of it in the Scriptures, the cedar is the divine favorite. When the plains to be seen from the window of this stage in which we ride today are parched under summer heats, and not a grass blade survives the ferocity of this tree stands in luxuriance, defying the summer sun. And when the storms of winter terrify the earth and hurl the rocks in avalanche down this mountain side, this tree grapples the hurricane of snow in triumph and leaves the spent fury at its feet. From sixty to eighty feet high are these, the horizontal branches of great sweep, with their burden of leaves needle shaped, the top of the tree pyramidal, a throne of foliage on which might and splendor and glory sit. But so continually has the extermination of trees gone on that for the most part the mountains of Lebanon are bare of foliage, while, I am sorry to say, the earth in all lands is being likewise denuded.

BE SPARING OF GOD'S TREES.

The ax is slaying the forests all round the earth. To stop the slaughter God opened the coal mines of England and Scotland and America and the world, practically saying that, "Here is fuel; as far as possible let my trees alone." And by opening for the human race the great quarries of granite and showing the human family how to make brick, God is practically saying, "Here is building material; let my trees alone." We had better stop the axes among the broadlands. We had better stop the axes in all our forests, as it would have been better for Syria if the axes had long ago been stopped among the mountains of Lebanon. To punish us for our reckless assault on the forests we have the disordered seasons, and now the droughts because the uplifted arms of the trees do not pray for rain, their presence according to all scientists disposing of the descent of the showers, and then we have the cyclones and the hurricanes multiplied in number and velocity because there is nothing to prevent their awful sweep.

Plant the trees in your parks that the weary may rest under them. Plant them along your streets, that up through the branches passers by may see the God who first made the trees and then made man to look at them. Plant them along the brooks, that under them the children may play. Plant them in your gardens, that as in Eden the Lord may walk there in the cool of the day. Plant them in cemeteries, their shade like a mourner's veil, and their leaves sounding like the rustle of the wings of the departed. Let Arbor Day, or the day for the planting of trees, recognized by the legislatures of many of the states, be observed by all our people, and the next one hundred years do us much in planting these leafy glories of God as the last one hundred years have accomplished in their destruction. When, not long before his death, I saw on the banks of the Hudson in his glazed cap, riding on horseback, George P. Morris, the great song

writer of America, I found him grandly emotional, and I could understand how he wrote "Woodman, spare that tree!" The verses of which many of us have felt like quaking in belligerent spirit, when under the stroke of some one without sense or reason we saw a beautiful tree prostrated:

Woodman, spare that tree! Touch not a single bough! In youth it sheltered me, And I'll protect it now. Tears out of God's hand That plucked it near his cot; There, woodman, let it stand, Thy ax shall harm it not. When but an idle boy, I sought its grateful shade; In all their gushing joy Here, too, my sisters play'd. My mother smil'd me here; My father press'd my hand— Forgive this foolish tear. But let that old oak stand! My heartstrings round thee cling, Close as thy bark, old friend! Here shall the wild bird sing, And still thy branches bow; Old tree! the storm still brave! And woodman, leave the spot; While I've a hand to save, Thy ax shall harm it not.

As we rode along on these the mountains of Lebanon, we bethink how its cedars spread their branches and breathe their aroma and cast their shadows all through the Bible. Solomon discoursed about them in his botanical works, when he spoke of trees "from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall." The Psalmist says, "The righteous shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon," and in one of his magnificent dialogues calls on the cedars to praise the Lord. And Solomon says the countenance of Christ is excellent as the cedars, and Isaiah declares, "The day of the Lord shall be upon all the cedars of Lebanon." And Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Amos and Zephaniah and Zechariah weave its foliage into their sublimest utterances.

As we ride over Lebanon today there is a howling wind sweeping past and a dash of rain, all the better enabling us to appreciate that description of a tempest which no doubt was suggested by what David had seen with his own eyes among these heights, for as a soldier he carried his wars clear up to Damascus, and such a poet as he, I warrant, spent many a day on Lebanon. And perhaps while he was seated on this very rock against which our carriage jolts, he writes that wonderful description of a thunder storm: "The voice of the Lord is powerful. The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. Yes, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf. Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire."

As the lion is the monarch of the fields and behemoth the monarch of the waters, the cedar is the monarch of the trees. And I think one reason why it is so glorified all up and down the Bible is because we need more of its characteristics in our religious life. We have too much of the willow, and are easily bent this way or that; too much of the aspen, and we tremble under every zephyr of assault; too much of the Bramble tree, and our sharp points sting and wound; but not enough of the cedar, wide branched and heaven aspiring and tempest grappling. But the reason these cedars stand so well is that they are deep rooted. They run their anchors down into the caverns of the mountain and fasten to the very foundations of the earth, and twist around and clutch themselves on the other side of the deepest layer of rock they can reach. It is the difference between Christians who stand and Christians who fall. It is the difference between a superficial character and one that has clutched its roots deep down around and under the Rock of Ages.

THE ROCK ROOTED CHRISTIAN.

One of the Lebanon cedars was examined by a scientist, and from its concentric circles it was found to be thirty-five hundred years old and still standing, and there is such a thing as everlasting strength, and such a stanchness of Christian character that all time and all eternity instead of being its demolition shall be its opportunity. Not such are those vacillating Christians who are so pious on Sunday that they have no religion left for the week day. As the anacardis gorges itself with food, and then seems for a long while to be thoroughly insensible, so there are men who will on Sunday get such a religious surfeit that the rest of the week they seem thoroughly dead to all religious emotion. They weep in church under a charity sermon, but if on Monday a subject of want presents itself at the door the beggar's safety will depend entirely on quick limbs and an unobstructed stairway. It takes the grace they can get to keep them from committing assault and battery on those intruders who come with pale faces and stories of distress and subscription papers. The reason that God planted these cedars in the Bible was to suggest to us that we ought, in our religious character, to be deep like the cedar, high like the cedar, broad branched as the cedar. A traveler measured the spread of the branches of one of these trees and found it one hundred and eleven feet from branch tip to branch tip, and I have seen cedars of Christian character that through their prayers and charities put out one branch to the uttermost parts of America, and another branch to the uttermost parts of Asia, and these wide branched Christians will keep on multiplying until all the earth is overshadowed with mercy.

But mark you, these cedars of Lebanon could not grow if planted in mild climates, and in soft air and in carefully watered gardens. They must have the gymnasium of the midnight hurricane to develop their arms. They must play the athlete with a thousand winters before their feet are rightly planted and their foreheads rightly lifted and their arms rightly muscled. And if there be any other way for developing strong Christian character except by storms of trouble, I never heard of it. Call the roll of martyrs, call the roll of the prophets, call the roll of the apostles and see which of them had an easy time of it. Which of these cedars grew in the warm valley? Not one of them. Honeysuckles thrive best on the south side of the house, but cedars in a Syrian whirlwind.

RESISTANCE TO EVIL BRINGS STRENGTH.

Men and women who hear this or read this, instead of your grumbling because you have it hard, thank God that you are in just the best school for making heroes and heroines. It is true both for this world and the next. Rock that baby in a cradle cushioned and canopied; graduate him from that into a costly high chair and give him a gold spoon; send him to school wrapped in furs enough for an arctic explorer; send him through a college where he will not have to study in order to get a diploma because his father is rich; start him in a profession where he begins with an office, the floor covered with Axminster, and a library of books in Russian morocco, and an armed chair upholstered like a throne, and an embroidered ottoman upon which to put his twelve dollar

garters, and then lay upon his table the best ivory cigarholder you can import from Brussels, and he stands outside his door a prancing span that will prize at the horse fair, and leave him estate enough to make him independent of all struggle, and what will become of him? If he do not die early of inanition or disipation he will live a useless life, and die an unimpaired death, and go into a fool's eternity.

But what has been the history of most of the great cedars in merchandise, in art, in law, in medicine, in statesmanship, in Christianity? "John, get up and milk the cows; it's late; it's half past 5 in the morning. Split an armful of wood on your way out so that we can build the fires for breakfast. Put your bare feet on the cold oilcloth, and break the ice in your pitcher before you can wash. Yes; it has been snowing and drifting again last night, and we will have to break the roads." The boy's educational advantage, a long oak plank, which you have to it, in country school house, and stove heating out more smoke than heat. Pressing out from one hardship to another. After a while a position on salary or wages small enough to keep life, but keep it at its lowest ebb. Starting in occupation or business with prosperous men trying to fight you back at every step. But after a good while fairly on your feet and your opportunities widening, and then by some sudden turn you are disappointed. You are master of the situation and defiant of all earth and hell.

THE SCHOOL FOR HEROES.

A Lebanon cedar! John Milton on his way up to the throne of the world, sacred poetry must sell his copyright of "Paradise Lost" for \$72 in three payments. And William Shakespeare on his way up to be acknowledged the greatest dramatist of all ages must hold horses at the door of the London theatre for a sixpence, and Homer must struggle through total blindness to immortality, and John Bunyan must cheer himself up by making a flute out of his prison stool, and Cervantes, the sculptor, must toll on through orphanage, modeling a lion in butter before he could cut his statues in marble. And the great Stephenson must watch cows in the field for a few pennies and then become a stoker, and afterward mend clocks before he puts the locomotive on its track and calls forth plaudits from parliaments and medals from kings. Abel Stevens is picked up a neglected child of the street, and rises through his consecrated genius to be one of the most illustrious clergymen and historians of the century. And Bishop Jones of the same church in boyhood worked his passage from Ireland to America, and up to a usefulness where, in the bishopric, he was second to no one who ever adorned it.

While in banishment Xenophon wrote his "Anabasis" and Thucydides his "History of the Peloponnesian War," and Victor Hugo must be exiled for many years to the island of Guernsey, before he can come to that height in the affections of his countrymen that crowds Champs Elysees and the adjoining boulevards with one million mourners as his hearse rolls down to the Church of the Madeleine. Oh, it is a tough old world, and it will keep you back and keep you down and keep you under as long as it can! Hall sons and daughters of the fire!

Stand, as the avell when the stroke of stairway
Stems but more deeply root the oak whose
bravely arms embrace the blast;
Stand like an anvil; noise and heat are born of
earth and die with time;
The soul, like God's, is square and vast, is solemn,
still, serene, sublime.

Thirty years from now the foremost men in all occupations and professions will be those who are this hour in awful struggle of early life, many of them without five dollars to their name. So in spiritual life it takes a course of bereavements, persecutions, sicknesses and losses to develop stairway Christian character. I got a letter a few days ago saying: "I have hardly seen a full day since I was born, and I could not write my own name until I was 30 years of age, and I am very poor; but I am, by the grace of God, the happiest man in Chicago."

The Bible speaks of the snows of Lebanon, and at this season of the year the snows there must be tremendous. The deepest snow ever seen in America would be insignificant compared with the midwest winter of snows on these Lebanon mountains. The cedars catch that skyfall of crystals on their brow and on their long arms. Piled up in great heaps are those snows, enough to crush other trees to the ground, splitting the branches from the trunk and leaving them rent and torn, never to rise. But what do the cedars care for these snows on Lebanon? They look up to the winter skies and say: "Snow on! Empty the white heavens upon us, and when this storm is past let other processions of tempest try to bury us in the fury. We have seen a hundred winters be accustomed to this, and for the next five hundred winters we will cheerfully take all you have to send, for that is the way we develop our strength, and that is the way we serve God and teach all ages how to endure and conquer." So I say: Good cheer to all people who are snowed under! Put your faith in God and you will come out gloriously. Others may be stunted growth, or weak linkers on the lower levels of spirituality, but you are going to be Lebanon cedars. At last it will be said of such as you: "These are they who came out of great tribulation and had their robes washed and made white in the blood of the lamb."

THE GREAT MAN'S FALL.

But while crossing over these mountains of Lebanon I bethink myself of what an exciting scene it must be when one of the cedars does fall. It does not go down like a tree with a slight crack, that hardly makes the woodsman look up, or a hawk flutter from a neighboring bough. When a cedar falls it is the great event in the calendar of the mountains. The axmen fly. The wild beasts slink to their dens. The partridges swoop to the valley for escape. The neighboring trees go down under the awful weight of the descending monarch. The rocks are moved out of their places, and the earth trembles as from miles around all ravines send back their sympathetic echoes. Crash! crash! crash! So when the great cedars of worldly or Christian influence fall it is something terrific. Within the past few years how many mighty and overtopping men have gone down! There seems now to be an epidemic of moral disaster. The moral world, the religious world, the political world, the commercial world, are quaking with the fall of Lebanon cedars. It is awful. We are compelled to cry out with Zechariah, the prophet, "How! fir trees, for the cedar is fallen!" Some of the smaller trees are glad of it. When some great dealer in stocks goes down the small dealers clap their hands and say, "Good for him!" When a great political leader goes down the small politicians clap their hands and say, "Just as I expected!" When a great minister of religion falls many little ministers laugh up their sleeves and think: themselves somehow advantaged. Ah, beloved brethren, no one makes anything out of moral shipwreck. Not a willow by the rivers of Damascus, not a sycamore on the plains of Jericho, not an olive

tree in all Palestine is helped by the fall of a Lebanon cedar. Better weep and pray for the fallen and listen to Paul's advice to the Galatians when he says, "Considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." No man is safe until he is dead unless he be divinely protected. A greater thinker than Lord Francis Bacon the world never saw, and he changed the world's mode of thinking for all time—his "Novum Organum" a miracle of literature. With \$38,000 salary and estates worth millions and from the highest judicial bench of the world, he goes down under the power of bribery and confessed his crime and was sentenced to the Tower and the scorn of centuries. How! fir tree, for the cedar is fallen!

WIDE WASTING MORAL REINS.

Warren Hastings, rising until he became governor general of India and the envy of the chief public men of his day, plunges into cruelties against the barbaric people he had been sent to rule, until his name is chiefly associated with the criminal trial in Westminster hall, where upon him came the anathemas of Sheridan, Fox, Edmund Burke, the English nation and all time. How! fir tree, for the cedar is fallen! As eminent instances of moral disaster are found in our own land and our own time, instances that I do not recite lest I wound the feelings of those now alive to mourn the shipwreck, let your indignation against the fallen turn to pity. A judge in one of our American courts gives this experience. In a respectable but poor family a daughter was getting a musical education. She needed one more course of lessons to complete that education. The father's means were exhausted, and so great was his anxiety to help his daughter that he feloniously took some money from his employer, and going home to his daughter said, "There is the money to complete your musical education." The wife and mother suspected something wrong and obtained from her husband the whole story, and that night went around with her husband to the merchant's house and surrendered the whole amount of the money and asked forgiveness. Forgiveness was denied and the man was arrested. The judge, knowing all the circumstances, and that the money had all been returned, suggested to the merchant he had better let the matter drop for the sake of the wife and the daughter. No! he would not let it drop, and he did all he could to make the case conspicuous and blasting. The judge says that afterwards the merchant was so merciful that he was before him for breaking the law of the land. It is a poor rule that will not work both ways. Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall. Not congratulation, but tears, when a cedar has fallen!

YET THERE IS ONE CEDAR OF LEBANON THAT ALWAYS HAS AND ALWAYS WILL OVERTOP ALL OTHERS.

It is the Christ whom Ezekiel describes as a goodly cedar, and says, "Under it shall come all fowl of every wing." Make your nest in that great cedar. Then let the storms beat, and the earth rock, and time end, and eternity begin, all shall be well. ALL NATIONS TO REST IN HIS SHADOW. In my journey up and down Palestine and Syria nothing more impressed me than the trees—the terebinths, the sycamores, the tamarisks, the oleanders, the mulberries, the olives, the myrtles, the palms, the cedars—all of them explanatory of so much of the Scriptures. And the time is coming when, through an improved agriculture, the round world shall be circumferenced, engirdled, embosomed, emparadised in shade trees and fruit trees and flower trees. Isaiah declares in one place, "The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it; and in another place: 'All the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree. Instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree.' Oh, grandest arborescence of all time. Begin! Begin!

Oh, I am so glad that the holy land of heaven, like the holy land of Palestine and Syria, is a great place for trees, an orchard of them, a grove of them, a forest of them. St. John saw them along the streets, and on both sides of the river, and every month they yielded a great crop of fruit. You know what an imposing appearance trees give to a city on earth, but how it exalts my idea of heaven when St. John describes the city on high as having its streets and its ramparts lined with them. Oh, the trees! the trees! the Jasper walls, the fountains, the temples were not enough. There would have been something wanting yet. So to complete all that pomp and splendor I behold the up branching trees of life. Not like those stripped trees now around us, which like banished minstrels through the long winter night utter their dolorous lament, or in the blast moan like lost spirits wandering up and down the gale, their leaf shall never wither. Whether you walk on the banks of the river you will be under trees, or by the homes of martyrs under trees, or by the heavenly temple under trees, or along the palace of the King: immortal under trees. "Blessed are they that do his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life." St. John's Jackson's dying utterance was beautifully suggested, "Let us cross over and lie down under the trees!"

HOW OUR NAVY USED TO SHOOT.

The proficiency of American gunnery is perhaps best illustrated by the Constitution's first action with the Guerriere, in which she was hulled but three times, while her antagonist, to use the words of her commander, was reduced to a "perfect wreck" within forty minutes from the time the Constitution began to fire. This battle occurred on Aug. 19, 1812. In her action with the Java, Dec. 29, 1812, off the coast of Brazil, the Constitution was hulled but four times, and with the exception of her maintopmast yard she did not lose a spar. The Java, on the other hand, was "totally dismasted," while her hull was so shattered and pierced with shot holes that it was impossible to get her to the harbor of San Salvador, which was only a few hours' sail. In her action with the Cyane and Levant the forces opposed were: Constitution, fifty-one guns, with 1,387 pounds of metal; British, fifty-five guns, with 1,508 pounds of metal. In this extraordinary action the Constitution was hulled only thirteen times, while the Cyane had every brace within forty minutes from the time the Constitution began to fire. "Her main and mizenmasts left in a tottering state, and other principal spars wounded, several shots in the hull, nine or ten between wind and water." The Levant also was roughly hounded.

Before dismissing the subject of gunnery we should take into consideration: 1. The inferior quality of American cannon and shot. 2. The deficiency in weight of American shot. 3. The fact that in two of the four actions between single frigates the English used French cannon and shot, which were 8 per cent. heavier than their nominal English equivalents.—Century.

The little king of Spain was reproved the other day for desiring to play with some dirty children on the beach. His mother said it was undignified for a king to be seen in such company, whereupon he replied that he "did not want to be a king; he wanted to be a child."

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